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A
D E F E N C E
OF THE
M E T H O D I S T S

WHO DO NOT ATTEND
THE NATIONAL CHURCH,
BUT AVAIL THEMSELVES

OF
Liberty of Conscience.

By THOMAS TAYLOR.

SECOND EDITION.

“ Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.”

Rom. xiv. 5.

“ Prove all things: hold fast that which is good.”

1 Thess. v. 21.

“ We have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man,

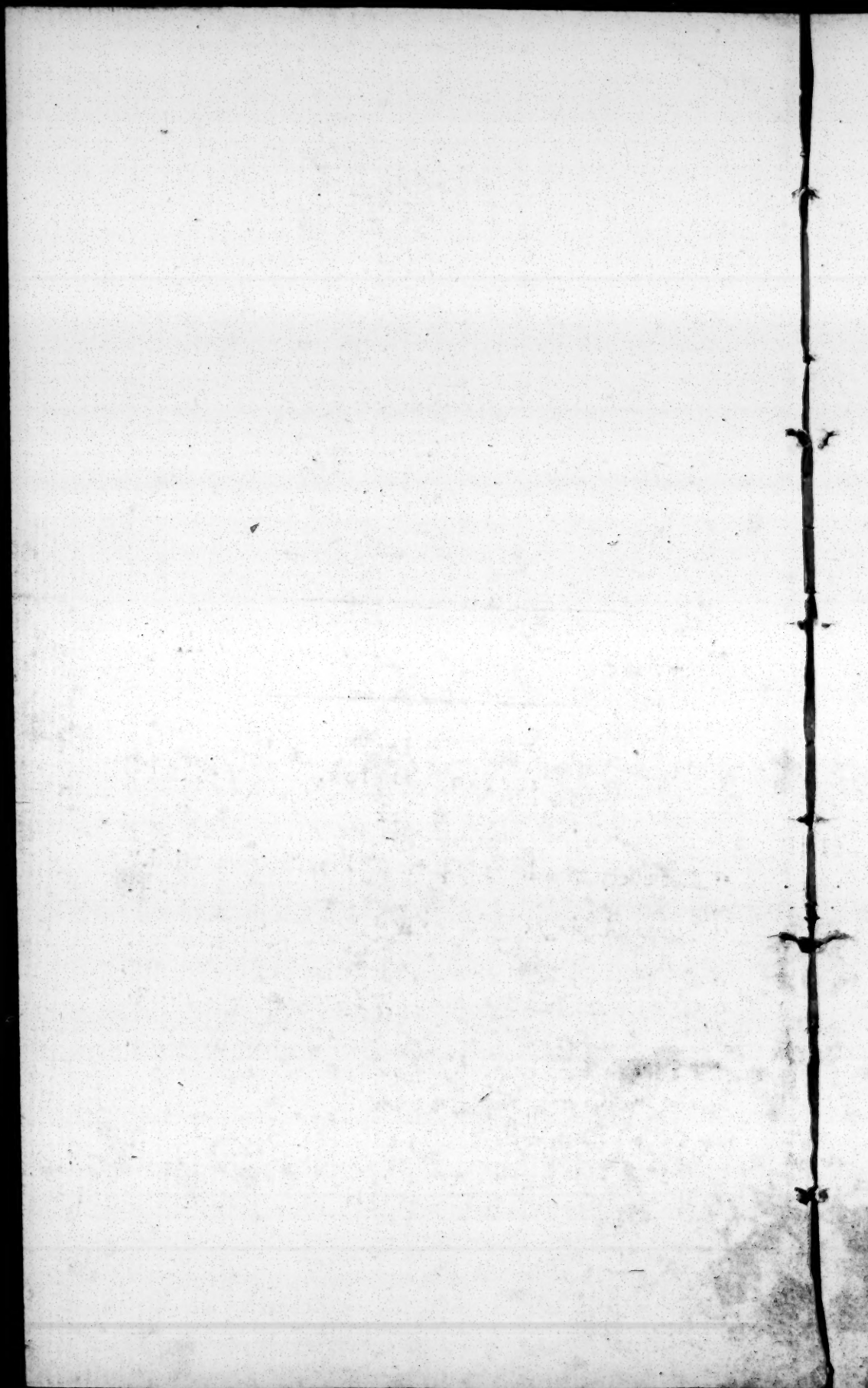
“ we have defrauded no man.”

2 Cor. vii. 2.

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M D C C X C I I I .





A D E F E N C E, &c.

IT is well known by numbers yet living, in how deplorable a state true religion was in the beginning of this Century, the very form of godliness was forgotten among all descriptions of mankind, both teachers and such as were taught; they lived without God and without hope in the world, seeking death in the error of their way, and none caring for their souls. If there were a few, as there has been a seed in all ages, that had real piety, they were as lights put under a bushel, so that few saw their light; it did not *so* shine before men as to induce others to glorify their Father who is in heaven; so that they were in some measure like salt which has no savour; therefore their neighbours still lay in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in misery, wretchedness and ruin.

In the midst of this dark and general Apostasy, God in infinite pity was pleased to raise up some faithful witnesses to shew poor sinners their transgressions, and the nation in general their sins.—Some of these had, in every sense of the word, a liberal education, being trained up in the most celebrated seminaries in the world. Others had no higher advantages than that of a private education,

and others none at all except what they acquired by hard and close study. But God put his spirit upon them, ordained and sent them into the highways and hedges, and by them gathered in many precious souls. In doing this they met with much opposition from all sorts of mankind. Often were they ill treated; and some might be said to die martyrs in consequence of the ill usage which they met; that is, their days were shortened by the hurts and hardships which they received in this arduous, but blessed work.

In many places the souls that were gathered in wished for private instruction, as well as public preaching, and for that end were formed into Societies; they also wished to have every ordinance administered to them by those whom God sent to call them out of darkness and misery, and in some places it was granted them very early, especially in London, where they have been favoured with Service at the most convenient hours, and also the Lord's Supper, and that constantly. As many places in the Country have as much need of both these favours as the people in London, they have long solicited it, and whenever they could shew sufficient reasons for their request it has been granted.

As Calls of this Sort daily increase, from the good already done thereby, the warm Churchmen seem much alarmed, and have raised a mighty Stir in the nation, more especially since the decease of Mr. Wesley, the leading Instrument of the great work which God has wrought for Fifty Years past in these kingdoms. One might imagine that we were without the Bible, or that Liberty of Conscience were at an end. It would not be
amiss

amiss therefore to enquire whether the people who desire the privileges of Englishmen have either Scripture or reason, or the Laws of their Country on their side. From the beginning we have had the whole world against us. We have been stoned, pulled down, dragged through the streets, put into ponds, prisons, fled for our lives; often in hunger, cold, weariness and pain; and, now when we might have expected a little ease, especially those among us who have wore out the prime of our days, and find our strength beginning to fail, it seems as if we had all to begin again, and our foes are become the men of our own household. What have we done to merit such an outcry? Why, we don't go to Church; we preach in Church hours, and we baptize children; yea, and we administer the Lord's Supper, and great numbers of the people come to hear us at these hours, and have their children baptized; and also come to receive the Lord's Supper with us. These are our high crimes and misdemeanours, and for which we are threatened even with death itself; and against whom law has been enquired into, and every engine set to work as though we were the vilest monsters upon earth.

I. Purpose in the following tract,

FIRST, to consider some reasons in favour of those who wish to assert their privileges, and avail themselves of the liberty of their Country.

SECONDLY, to answer some objections.

THIRDLY, to make some remarks upon a nameless pamphlet.

FOURTHLY, to take some notice of a Sermon print-

ed in the Arminian Magazine for May and June 1790.

LASTLY, a short and affectionate Address to my much esteemed Brethren in the Ministry.

I begin then with some reasons why our Brethren cannot join with the established Church.

It may not be amiss just to premise, that if any thing occurs in the following pages which may seem to bear hard upon the established clergy respecting either life or doctrine, or the hierarchy of the Church, it is extorted in our just defence, or I should have quietly passed them by, and left them just as I found them; although I have not said a tenth part of what might be said, or even what the Bible says, and what they will find an awful and incensed Deity will speak when he calls them to give an account of their Stewardship.—All my intention is, to shew that we have very sufficient reason for taking the steps which we have, and that we are sufficiently warranted from the oracles of God.

F I R S T.

MANY of them who were brought up in that Community never found it profitable unto them. They lived as the generality do, who are in that connexion, without God, and without hope in the world, that is, in open rebellion, in drunkenness, in prophanity, and in the sinful pleasures of the age. In short, they were in the flesh, and could not please God. In this state they went on, thronging the downward road, seeking death in the error of their way, living in an unregenerate state, having

ing the carnal mind which is enmity against God, which is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

And if some few of them did not go to the same excesses of riot, yet they were contented in having a form of godliness, while strangers to the power. In this state of carnality, and enmity, they went on, hasting to everlasting destruction, till it pleased God to bring them to hear the pure gospel preached with power; they then saw the danger they were in, and those about them; they cried for mercy to the God of mercy; they confessed and forsook their sins, and found that mercy which first found them. But in their distress they found no help in or from the Church, neither from ministers nor people; nay, on the other hand, they were persecuted, and laughed to scorn; and the truth, as it is in Jesus, was ridiculed, and those who sincerely preached it, so that they met with nothing but ill treatment, either from clergy or laity. Often times the sermons of the former were full of railing accusations, or notorious falsehoods, contrary both to scripture and sound experience, so that instead of finding their souls edified, they frequently returned with their minds burthened and pained, in that the bread of life was withheld from them, so that they were starved, torn and wounded, none caring for them. Finding they were spending their money for that which was not bread, and their labour for that which did not satisfy, they saw clearly that it was their duty to attend the ministry of those whom the Lord had owned and blessed to their souls, the seals of whose mission they were; and in this they think themselves sufficiently authorized from the word of God. They think they
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have gone long enough to the broken Cisterns which can hold no water; they found it a dead ministry, and the teachers in general physicians of no value.

2. The established Church is a part of the state, a part of the civil government, and is made an engine thereunto; this is quite contrary to the life and maxims of our great Lord and Master. He declined the office of either king or governor in worldly matters. When he knew that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he withdrew and hid himself, disclaiming the power and policy of this world, his kingdom not being of this world; and therefore destitute of the craft, subtlety and deceit by which the kingdoms of this world are supported.

Now a church thus connected, is a branch of a worldly kingdom, and admits into its composition, the different oppressions, intrigues and policies, cruelties and exactions, which cannot belong to him whose kingdom is Righteousness, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost. But then the Church of England, as established by law, is of this cast, a motley mixture of an outward Court Worship with the State; so that no law can pass without the concurrence of the Lords spiritual; and as these spiritual Lords are made such by the Court, it is but reasonable that they should be obedient to their Creators. Meanwhile preaching the gospel, labouring in the word and doctrine, feeding the flock of God, which he has purchased with his own blood, are circumstances which are little attended to, or rather not at all; half the year is spent in giving their assent or withholding it, to Acts of Parliament, and the other half in pomp and luxury. Such
cannot

cannot be the fathers of the church of Christ; therefore - such a worldly sanctuary cannot be the sanctuary of our Saviour.

Mr. Charles Wesley speaks very pertinently upon this subject. Note the following lines.

“ Inventions *added* in a fatal hour,
 “ Human appendages of pomp and power,
 “ Whatever shines in outward grandeur great,
 “ I give it up----a creature of the State.
 “ Wide of the Church, as hell from heav’n is wide,
 “ The blaze of riches, and the glare of pride,
 “ The vain desire to be entitled *Lord*,
 “ The worldly kingdom, and the princely sword.
 “ But should the bold usurping spirit dare
 “ Still higher climb, and sit in Moses’ chair,
 “ Power o’er my faith and conscience to maintain,
 “ Shall I submit, and suffer it to reign?
 “ Call it *the Church*, and darkness put for light,
 “ Falshood with truth confound, and wrong with right?
 “ No: I dispute the evil’s haughty-claim,
 “ The spirit of the world be still its name,
 “ Whatever call’d by man ’tis purely evil,
 “ ’Tis Babel, Antichrist, and Pope and Devil.”*

3. The generality of the ministers are such as God’s word forbids us to join with; they neither live nor preach the gospel; they are for the most part such as live in pleasure and dissipation, in avarice and luxury, and in all the fashionable follies of the age. The ministers which our Lord approves of are such as are instructed in the Kingdom of God; and such an one is like a wise householder bringing out of his treasure things new and old. They must “ Study to shew themselves approved of
 “ God, workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly
 “ dividing

* See the Rev. Charles Wesley’s *Epistle to the Rev. John Wesley*, page 5.

" dividing the word of truth ;" * The Minister of the Gospel must be *blameless, vigilant, prudent, of good behaviour, hospitable, apt to teach. Not given to wine, no striker, not desirous of filthy lucre, but gentle, patient, not loving money; ruling his own house well, having his children in subjection with all gravity. Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.* † His outward conduct must be such that he must have a good report, so that there may be no just cause of reproach. But is this the character which the general part of the ministers of the Church sustain? Are they free from the vices forbidden by the Apostle? No: their conduct manifests the contrary. Is there a horse-race or a play acted, in any part of the land, where you will not find some of the clergy? Are not many of them living in open sins? Will they not curse and swear, lie and get drunk? Can these be the ministers of Jesus? Are these the men whom he calls the light of the world, and the salt of the earth? Are these followers of Christ; such as are instant in season and out of season; such as will not count their lives dear unto themselves, so that they may finish their course with joy? To say that there are some of a different character is saying nothing to the purpose. The number is but small, or we should hear or see something of them. And why do not those excellent ones openly testify against such, as the servants of God did against the false prophets in the days of old? What fellowship can righteousness have with unrighteousness? St. Paul writes, that, if any one who is named a brother

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* 2 Tim. ii. 15. † 1 Tim. iii. 2—7.

be a lewd person, or covetuous, or an idolator, or railer, or drunkard, or rapacious, not to converse with such an one, nor eat with him.* I think a direction cannot be plainer, and as such it ought to be complied with. Are the great doctrines of the gospel, in the general, preached in the Church? I think few will be so hardy as to affirm it. I grant a sermon may now and then have a few sentences which may border upon the truth, and the very same things contradicted even in the very same sermon, and often entirely gainsaid in another; so that it appears to be guess work throughout the whole. But will any man call that preaching the gospel? Should any of us chuse a physician, if he was no better skilled in his profession than such divines are? Would we intrust our lives and health into such hands? Or should a lawyer be no better acquainted with the laws and constitutions of his country, than such divines are with the Scriptures and sound experience, we should not freely venture a cause into their hands in which our sole property depended. I apprehend, in preaching the gospel, our disease should be clearly described, and our only remedy fairly delineated, and the manner of its application; these should be standing topics, and never kept out of sight. Besides these great, general, and noble truths, involve in them a variety of other things relative to the life of a christian, and which no one can properly attend unto, but such as have some experience of the same. The joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, elevations and dejections, temptations and difficulties of a christian are such as a stranger intermeddleth

intermeddleth not with; and can that man guide my soul, who is a stranger to all things belonging to the christian warfare? *The natural man*, let his calling be what it will, *cannot receive the things of the Spirit, they are foolishness to him, nor can he know them because they are spiritually discerned*; that is, only known by the Spirit which the natural man hath not received. Now can any one of common sense think that God has called any man to a spiritual work who has not the Spirit. He may harangue upon doctrines, politics, ceremonies, forms and modes, though he has not the Spirit; but still he is no minister of Christ, no true shepherd, not one who will naturally care for the flock. And be it observed, no civil power on earth is to chuse the officers of God's house; he will chuse them himself, and who can stay his hands, or say, what doest thou! Therefore when the civil power usurps that authority which Christ has not given them, the tools of their usurpation are intruders, and such as prove a curse and not a blessing to mankind. The apostle says, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his, that is, is not a child of God; then surely if he is not a private member of Christ, it is not likely that he can be a minister of him. If he is not a child of God, a real christian, then he is an enemy to God, and an enemy to him who died for him upon the cross. Now no prince in his senses will employ an enemy as an ambassador; he will not repose any confidence in him till he is sure of his fidelity: and can we believe a God of infinite wisdom will employ such as are enemies, and aliens in their minds by wicked works, in a trust of such importance? Will he intrust the sacred mysteries of the Kingdom to such as will corrupt them?

For that will certainly be the case with such as are condemned by the truth as it is in Jesus. Such men are in the flesh, and cannot please God; their carnal mind is enmity against him, and cannot therefore be either his children or ministers. Now I ask, by what rule of reason, or by what passage of Scripture, am I obliged to hear such? to countenance their ministry and bid them God speed? This being the case, I shall now speak in the name of my brethren, we see no rule either in Scripture, reason, or experience, which can oblige us to sit under a dead erroneous ministry; but, contrarywise, all make against it.

But, perhaps it may be said, there are enlightened men in the Church, and such as preach the truth, and practice it too, and therefore where there are such men we ought to hear them.—It was observed, such ministers in the Church as even make a profession of the truth are very few, and therefore if we were willing to hear them we cannot. But we have some objections, and we think reasonable ones, against even hearing those when we can be favoured with what we prefer to what they in the general preach. First, they are not our fathers; they were not the instruments in God's hands of begetting us to a lively hope in Christ; their ministry did not reach our state; dead it found us; and dead it left us. Indeed they did not put their lives in their hands to come after us; we might have run to destruction for them; they did not go out into the highways and hedges, the lanes and streets, where many of us lay scattered, and ignorant as savages, and such we might have remained for them, seeing they preached only where things were made ready for them.

viz. a Rectory, Vicarage, Curacy, or Lecturership. Had our ministers done thus, we might have perished in our sins. But they came forth at the hazard of their lives without any prospect of reward, save that of doing good; they preached in streets and market places; in cottages and prisons, and often got well pelted with clods, or rotten eggs; and frequently obliged to put up with very poor accommodations, and sometimes knew not where to lay their heads.—These were labourers, they entered the harvest with the sickle in their hands, bore the toil and heat of the day, and by that means awakened our sensual sleepy souls, or we might have perished for ever! Now can any persuade us to think slightly of these men, to whom, under God, we owe our all? Or can any one persuade us to condemn their ministry, by hearing others when we may hear them? Or by receiving the ordinances elsewhere, when we can receive them from their hands? No; they are our fathers, and we reverence them; they are God's messengers, and the glory of Christ*; they are ambassadors for Christ, who have besought us in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God; they are ministers by whom we have believed, and the seal of their Apostleship are we in the Lord, and by their fruits we know them. Therefore we desire to give honour to whom honour is due.

4. We desire our families to hear that same gospel which we have found to be the power of God unto salvation, and to hear it at a time when it is most likely to profit them; and what time so likely as the Forenoon on the Lord's day? There are numbers who cannot attend early in the morning, and often in the evening the children grow
sleepy,

* 2. Cor. viii. 23.

sleepy, and in such a case what good will the preaching do them? In such circumstances it is likely to do them harm, to disgust them, and thereby prejudice them against it. Moreover, suppose we should take them to some other place in a forenoon, we will say the Church, they will often hear the fundamental truths contradicted, and error itself is very prevalent, and if a plausible error should affect them in such a manner as to fix its pernicious residence in their minds, so as to subvert them from the truth, how could we excuse ourselves. Would a wise, knowing parent, who loves his children, either put poison in their way, or suffer it to be mixed in their food? Surely he would not, if he either regarded their lives or their health. Now error, destructive error, soon insinuates its baneful influence into the minds of such as are up-grown, and they are too easily led away with it, and thereby fall from their steadfastness: and will not Satan be very ready to assist its operation upon young minds when they sit under its sound? And will God excuse us, or can we excuse ourselves, in leading them into so dangerous a temptation?

What numbers in this kingdom have had their minds feelingly touched under the word, and by going to hear the truth contradicted, and a broad way to heaven pointed out, fashionable sins dressed up in the robe of innocence, and real religion arrayed in a frightful dress, have had their convictions laid to sleep, and their consciences stunned? and having shook off the painful conviction hardened their hearts against the truth, and resolved never to come under the sound of it any more; the hurt has been healed slightly, when there has been no true peace in the soul. Now we wish to keep ourselves and families from such a

We wish them to sit under the pure truth as it is in Jesus, as we know faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, well knowing it is the truth which will make them free.

5. There is no order kept in the Church, no discipline that is good for any thing. There is no private examination either into the principles or lives of such as are called Church-men; there is no discrimination made concerning who are proper communicants, and who are not; no distinction made between the clean, and the unclean; an omission only in the Church of England. Some care is taken among all others, whether national or congregational, whether Popish, Lutheran, Calvinian, Jew, or Mehometen, they all pay some attention to discipline, but the Church of England has none: all come to there Sacraments that will, nor did I ever hear of any being repelled, except some few instances where some have been refused because they were Methodists*; and a happy circumstance it would have been to the Methodists if they had served them all so. Now any one who reads the New Testament with attention, cannot but see that great care is taken to keep improper persons from the Lord's Supper, and other church privileges. In this they imitated the practice of our Saviour who preached publicly to all, but still reserved private matters to his little Society, yea, even in his last supper he only permitted the Twelve to be with him. It has been objected that Judas was present at those seasons, and our Saviour knew him and what

** Mr. Wesley has been refused the Sacrament, and so have I, and others of my Brethren.*

he was. Judas professed himself a disciple of Christ, and was therefore an hypocrite; but the evil of Judas's heart was not manifest but to our Lord who gave him intimations that he knew it, especially the night in which he betrayed him, and perhaps oftener, as we may judge from John vi. 70. Judas did not curse or swear, or get drunk, or prophane the sabbath, at least if he did so he did it privately, so that all that can be inferred from the case of Judas is, that there will be hypocrites in the church of God. But even in the case of Judas, it may be a doubt if he was always permitted to be present with our Saviour and the other disciples; it is pretty clear that he was not present when our Saviour delivered that most excellent discourse, and made that solemn prayer, John xiv. 15, 16, 17; he was then gone out upon his execrable design. We find the primitive church exceeding tenacious in that matter, not only respecting the lives of such as they admitted to their privileges, but even their doctrines; so that if a man held any erroneous opinion he was rejected till he abjured it. But all this is set aside in the Church of England, not only in private persons, but even in the ministers themselves, insomuch that they have been known to be so drunken that they could not perform their office.

Now what fellowship can light have with darkness? Or what part can the believer have with the infidel? The Supper of the Lord is an ordinance of Communion; that is one end of the Institution; *The cup of blessing*, says the Apostle, *which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread**,

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* 1. Cor. x. 16. 17.

So speaks St. Paul. But what kind of comment is the order of the Church of England upon this passage? or what kind of analogy is there between them? Our Lord says, "If thy brother offend thee, tell him his fault between him and thee alone—if he will not hear thee, take two or three with thee—if he will not hear them, tell it to the Church—if he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as an heathen man, or as a publican." I ask here again, is there any meaning in all this? Then what is that meaning? Who, or what is that Church we are to apply to in the case of the obstinate offender? How are we to tell the offence unto the Church? Does any thing like this discipline obtain in the national Church?

6. It is a weighty and a just objection to consider the long and cruel persecution which the national Church has been guilty of in these kingdoms. From the ninth year of Queen Elizabeth to the year 1688 was that persecution carried on, save the time of the Commonwealth, which was not twenty years, which drove many to seek refuge in America; left their native land, with every earthly comfort, to maintain a good conscience in those inhospitable regions, inhabited only by savages, less savage in some respects than those which they left behind them. The cruel oppressions of the Star-chamber, and other ecclesiastical tyrannies, at length kindled the civil wars in England, and involved the nation for several years in desolation and blood. for a few years there was liberty of conscience, and the pure gospel was preached, and a check was put upon iniquity. But many who turned with the times, and put on a mask, grew weary, brought in an abandoned King, and a set of profligate wretches with the
state

state engine, namely, the hierarchy of the Church; and now two thousand of the best ministers in the world, whose works praise them to this day, were turned out of their stations, and all the prisons in England were filled with the most excellent people in the nation. Fines, banishment, different corporeal punishments, were inflicted; only in England they did not formally take away their lives*; although the hardships which they endured I believe shortened many of their days.

In Scotland they did not come off so well, they were handled more roughly. Many were formally put to death, and some in a most cruel manner, as by the Rack, the
Boots,

** I mean their lives were not formally taken away at that time. But previous to that time several were formally martyred, as Joan Bocher, and George Van Paris, a Dutchman, through the influence of Cranmer; one in 1549, the latter in 1551.*

John Weelmacker, and Kendreck Terwoat, July 22, 1575; all these were burned alive in Smithfield.

Copping and Thacker were also put to death, in 1581.

Edward Campion, Ralph Sherwin, and Alexander Bryant, in 1582.

Barrowe Greenwood, and Penry in 1593.

Bartholomew Legate burnt in 1612.

Edward Weightman was burnt at Litchfield, April 11, 1612.

Now these were formally and cruelly martyred by the Church of England, for no other reason but that of differing in certain articles of Faith. No other crimes were so much as objected by them. But the numbers, which were mutilated, whipped, pilloried, shut up in loathsome prisons, and ruined; they and their families, the great day must declare, and all by the Church of England. Let every minister in that community remember this when he is subscribing, that he is joining his hand writing in favour of all this bloody work.

Boots, fastened to stakes by the sea side, at low water; numbers shut up in loathsome prisons, men and women together, without places of retirement, either for convenience, or decency, and thus were in effect suffocated to death. Others wandered about in rocks, dens, and caves of the earth, and were shot like wild beasts by the licentious soldiery, who were let loose upon them just to do what they pleased. Others were tortured, not only by the Boots*, the Rack, but by thumb-screws, lighted matches between their fingers, and numbers were starved to death. By whom did those Worthies suffer? By Mahometans, Jews, Heathens, Papists? Ah no! tell it not in *Gath*, publish it not in the streets of *Askelon*,—by Protestants! by the Church of England! Yes, and to perpetuate the shocking scene, and mock the Almighty, and insult common sense and humanity, there is the farce of a thanksgiving day kept on the twenty-ninth of May, for all this horrid cruelty, and the abominable prophanity brought into these kingdoms, by which drunkenness and other vices have flowed in with a full tide. Thus the Church of England has in her, besides all other abominations, the blood of the saints, which they shed like water.

7. Ought not every Englishman to be fully acquainted with these things? If he is not, must we not say, that he
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* *The Boots were an iron case sufficiently strong, drawn tight upon the legs, and wedges of iron drove in between the legs and the boot, so that flesh and bones were all crushed together; and in that horrid torture some expired, through dint of pain, after lingering a considerable time in exquisite torment.*

is wilfully ignorant, more especially if he is a professor of religion. Are we not called to prove all things, and hold fast that which is good? But of all descriptions of men, a preacher is the most inexcusable, if he is not well versed in Church History; that is so essential to his calling, that he must be an object of contempt if he remains ignorant thereof. We must suspect him of being either very indolent, or that he has some vile sinister motives, and is determined to keep his bad conscience in the dark. Ignorance, among the Papists, is stiled the mother of devotion! But what sort of devotion is it? blind bigotry, and persecuting rage; but let not that once be named among such as are called Protestants, lest they should be ranked with the mother of harlots.

8. We again repeat it, we think it a dangerous thing to expose our families to the hearing of Error, well knowing that many of them are not arrived at a proper age to judge for themselves. Or, is it safe for young people to hear the follies of the age pleaded for? such as Cards, Plays, Races, Assemblies, Balls, and other delusions and vanities, set forth as innocent amusements, and very proper recreations for young people. We know the evil tendency of such doctrine, and how ready the carnal mind is to receive it, and how dreadfully successful it has been the lives of many can bear witness throughout the land. How many thousands in the nation, who were beginning to awake out of sleep, and to feel their disease, but by those Physicians of no value, have had their convictions stunned; their hurt has been slightly healed, saying, peace, peace, when there was no peace, no real faith, no real change wrought in the soul, and so closing their eyes again are
more

more dreadfully secure than they were before. Are not these facts? do they not occur almost daily? and can any one blame us if we are unwilling to expose such as are under our care to so awful a peril? ye, we might say, almost to inevitable ruin and damnation. The Apostle says, be not carried away with divers and strange doctrines; if so, I think we ought to be careful of what we hear, or I don't see how we can escape, however confident we may be of ourselves. A wise man will not go where the plague is, without the most urgent necessity; and what plague is more dreadful than damnable and pernicious errors? If it is said they may take the good and leave the bad; it may be asked, Have all that hear error sufficient judgment so to do? Will not a deceitful heart and a tempting devil rather prompt them the contrary way? And why should we expose either our families or ourselves to such eminent danger? Is it to try our skill? is it not a tempting of providence? Do we chuse to go or send to that shop for food where we know poison is mixed with it? If there were no other shops but such as did mix poison with their goods, we must take the best care we can; but if we know those that take care to have nothing but what is wholesome, I think we should repair thither; the inference is pretty easy. Where we can have the pure truth preached, both in theory, experience, and practice, surely it is that we may hear it.—When our Lord bids us beware of false prophets, is it not nearly the same as if he had said shun them. Is it not a contempt of truth, and consequently of the God of truth, when we chuse to pass it by, and hear error? Can we find any part of the Bible will vindicate such a conduct? Is it not preferring a lie to the truth, and remaining willfully ignorant?

rant? and is it not a tempting of God to give us up to believe a lie, and the father of lies? Do not even Churchmen pray to be delivered from all *false doctrine and heresy*; from all hardness of heart, and *contempt of his word*. Now how does such a prayer agree with the conduct of thousands in England? What, pray for that which they are determined to run into? yea, and are exceeding angry if others will not do the same? Let any one reconcile this either to Scripture or common sense. Like the drunkard, who prays to be delivered from all evil, and runs directly into the evil, or into the temptation of the evil.

9. We do find many things in the Liturgy of the Church contrary to the word of God, and which the Nonconformists* in the last century very justly objected to as in the office of Baptism, the Visitation of the Sick, and the Burial of the Dead, and that of Confirmation, though we do not lay so much stress on those matters; yet as they are the old relicks of Popery it is a pitty they are not removed out of the way, as it is to be feared they are no small curse to thousands; and if the Church was right; if the rulers were such ministers as the word of God warrants, they would soon remove those monuments of Idolatry out of the way, and would serve them as Hezekiah did the Brafs Serpent. What have we our Bibles for, but that, in life and doctrine, we may walk thereby?

10. For want of having our service at a convenient hour and likewise the ordinances, we have driven thousands of our people from us, many of whom have thereby imbibed *divers and strange doctrines*; they had the strongest temptations

* See *Brother's Nonconformity*.

temptations to hear those *strange doctrines*. Now faith comes by hearing, whether it be a right or a wrong faith; it is as natural for me to receive the faith or doctrine I willingly sit under, as it is for the ground to drink in the rain that falls upon it. But can we answer it to our great Head and Bishop, to let those sheep be scattered upon the dark mountains of error, and to fall a prey to every devourer, when it is in our power to open a fold for them, and feed them with the sincere milk of the word. To say, as some have coldly said, Let them go, others will come in their place, is just as if a father should say, If my children cannot live upon unwholesome food, let them quit my house, or let them die; I can get more, so that I shall not want a family. Surely this must be the language of a step-father, and whose own the children are not, or he must be a very unnatural parent, and one that cares very little for his posterity. Now it is our duty to train up those children in the way in which they should go. It was a complaint long since made, by the great shepherd himself, against such as ought to have watched over the flock, that they had not done it. Hence he says, *My sheep wander through all the mountains, and upon every high hill; yea, my flock was scattered upon the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them*.* Must we bring this complaint upon ourselves again? Must we drive the sheep upon those barren mountains which the Lord complains of, under the notion of thus going to Church? In what part of the Bible are we taught this uncouth doctrine? Tell us not of old plans, or even Methodist Rules, but to the

* Ezekiel xxxiv. 6.

the law and to the testimony; and if we find it not there, who are they who will pretend to be wiser than the Oracles of God, or will make the word of God of none effect? By this unscriptural mode of proceeding we have driven many away from us, and I am afraid not a few into endless perdition. It is said, *Cursed is he which maketh the blind to wander out of the way**; and surely driving them under blind guides is the way to do it. And if the blind lead the blind both shall fall into the ditch.

11. Another circumstance which must have weight with all thinking people, and that is the different spirits which have been manifest in all the different parties concerned in this contest. On one hand, the candour and gentleness which has shewn itself on the side of liberty and freedom, willing to think and let think: and on the other side, what a positive, lordly, overbearing spirit of violence, as though they had received some very material injury, because they are not permitted to tyrannize over their brethren. Look no further than the circular letters which were sent abroad last year, which will confirm what is here said. Compare the letters which were sent from Newcastle upon Tyne, Newcastle under Line, Nottingham, and Plymouth Dock, with those sent from Birmingham, Cornwell, Cork and various other places.† In how respectable a manner do the former treat the preachers as

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* Deut, xxvii. 18.

† I have seen a small pamphlet, an Address to the Society in Newcastle, I wish every one to read it.

well as their opposing brethren? And what sourness and contempt both to ministers and people breathe in the latter? The one is like the Prince of peace, and the other has a fierceness that carries menace and contempt in it. I believe our brethren saw this the last Conference, and it had no small effect upon their minds. And how have matters gone since? The utmost perverseness and ill-nature have been discovered in the Church party, and innumerable lies have been formed and vended abroad, yea, awful and dark threatenings have issued out, and it plainly appears that nothing but a fear of the laws of the land, has withheld them from open violence all which must argue it either to be a bad cause, or the parties concerned in it bad defenders, or both. Our blessed Saviour never carried on his sacred cause with rage, bitterness, falsehood, invective, slander, and calumny. Such methods the Papists made use of, and so did the persecuting Church-men for a century and a half; and it is a pity that the same leaven continues to ferment in numbers to the present day. We cannot help seeing this, and it grieves us, we know it is wrong; we are grieved for their sakes, and for the sake of that blessed cause for which the bleeding reconciler laid down is precious life. In this they cannot hurt us; but they hurt themselves; nor can the love of God dwell with such tempers, and therefore if they are wise they will seek to have them destroyed.

12. The enjoying our legal right can infringe upon no one, seeing others can possess their liberty equally the same. We want to compel no one, but are quite willing that others should enjoy the same privileges we enjoy ourselves. Therefore we wrong no man, we defraud

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no man, we persecute no man, nor do we desire to lord it over the consciences of any. We only plead our just right as men accountable to God, as christians believing and professing the precepts of Christ, who was far from using any constraint, but that of arguments, prayers, and tears, and declared that the pure worship of God was neither confined to the mountain of Samaria, nor to the Temple of Jerusalem; but that such as worship the Father must worship him in spirit and in truth. Such is the spirit, and such is the manner of that worship which we contend for. We are willing to leave others in the full possession of every privilege which they can or ought to enjoy. We wish to give the honour to our preachers which we believe due to the ministers of Christ. We will never hear a dead erroneous ministry while we can hear the pure truth which is spirit and life to our souls. But let others judge for themselves. We chuse our ministers to baptize our children, And also to receive the Lord's Supper at their hands, and let any man point out the scripture, or any period of the Primitive Church which condemns our conduct. Let us have no quibbles, no antiquated unscriptural traditions; let us have plain bible proofs that we are wrong, and we will yield to conviction. But at the same time, let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind; and let him act as God gives him light.

II. It may not be amiss just to notice some of the most plausible Objections against that Liberty of Conscience which we plead for. "It is contrary to Mr. *Wesley's* Rule?" Suppose it is, if it be not contrary to God's Rule what great harm is there in the matter? Mr. *Wesley* never avowed himself to be infallible. I think his Rule was,

Be ye Followers of me as I am of Christ. But then we deny the fact. Shew us the Rule, or what Rule do you mean? Do you mean the Rules of the Society? there is not a word about the Church in them? Do you mean the Poll Deed enrolled in the High Court of Chancery, declaring what the Conference, or what the Methodists are? There is not a word of the Church named there. Is it Mr. *Wesley's* Will you call his Rule? We do not find the word Church in it. Is it in the Letter which he left to be opened and read in the Conference, after his death? there is not a word about the Church even in that Rule either. Now had there been any such Rule as you mention, we should have found it in some of the above, especially in the two former; seeing the one is what every member of the Society is obliged to walk by, and conform to; and the other is what gives them a character, a reality in law. "Well, but he always exhorted to go to the Church, and Sacrament, and advised the Methodists never to leave the Church." So you say. But if those assertions of yours be contradicted by Mr. *Wesley's* well known practice, you will bring no small censure either on Mr. *Wesley* or yourselves. Has not Mr. *Wesley* acted as a Dissenter in London these forty years? Has he not preached, and administered the Lord's Supper, in Spitalfields, and West-street Chapels, all those years? or in the Foundry, or New Chapel. And were not all these Dissenting Chapels? They never were consecrated, the Bishop of London had nothing to do with them any more than he had with the Jewish Synagogue. Did not the other preachers in connection with Mr. *Wesley*, preach in those Chapels, and in Church hours too, in Mr. *Wesley's* absence? Did Mr.

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Wesley ever go to the Church in London, except he has been invited to preach occasionally in some Church? Did he not preach at Bristol in the Church hours? Did he not preach, and administer the Lord's Supper, the last LEEDS Conference, in the Church hours? Yes on the first Sunday in the month just in sight of the Parish Church. Was not that Dissenting? Has he not established a religious œconomy, or order, and admitted and sent a number of Preachers all over the three kingdoms, as well as into America, and the West Indies? Did he not summons those Preachers once a year to meet him in Conference? and did he not call them to an account respecting their life and doctrine? Could he do all this as a Church-man? Who gave him any such power, or who could do it as a Church-man? Has he not even formally ordained several of the preachers, and made them promise that they would administer the Lord's Supper? Could he or they do this except as Dissenters? Are not many of the Chapels, and Preachers licensed as Dissenting Chapels, and Dissenting Ministers? And are not both Chapels and Ministers liable to be fined if they are not so licensed? Is it then agreeable to truth for the Preachers to enter themselves as Dissenting Teachers, if they are not so? or is it agreeable to gospel simplicity to enter the Chapels as Dissenting Meeting-houses if they are not so? But indeed they must be so, seeing it is the statute in that case provided which must characterise them. The act of Toleration, which obtains the License, is expressly made for Protestant Dissenters, and if they are not such, why do they equivocate? and if they are, why do they deny it? Therefore Mr. *Wesley*, and all who have laboured in Com-

munion with him, must have acted as Dissenters, whether they have done right or wrong; and we sincerely thank God that they ever did so, seeing many thousands have been savingly brought to God by that means. The case with Mr. *Wesley* was this, he was brought up in High Church principles, and retained them till God taught him better. Nevertheless he loved the doctrines of the Church, and the Liturgy, especially the Prayers; but it is certain he did not submit to the Hierarchy of the Church any more than myself. Indeed he could not; the station in which Providence had placed him was such, that he must either disobey God or man; he chose the latter, and therefore was a Dissenter. The moment he set up the Standard in Moorfield Fields, and collected a Society, he was a Dissenter, and such was the following part of his life, for which thousands will have reason to praise God to all eternity.

“ But God has blessed the old plan, and we are not sure that he will bless any deviation from it; nay if the Methodists leave the Church God will leave them.” So then the matter is settled to some purpose. That bold assertion I have often heard, but in what part of the Bible is it written? that if the Methodists leave the Church God will leave them? Is there any thing like it in all the Book of God? No; if we abide in Christ he will abide in us, and if so, we shall never perish. But that term, *The Old Plan*, is so hacknied till it is become stale. What do you mean by it? It has been already observed that preaching in Church hours, and administering the Lord’s Supper, has been practised forty years, and that in a place where there was as little need of it as in any part of England; for there are Churches enough and many of them empty

empty enough in London. With regard unto its being blessed, I ask what was blessed, or, who, or what was the bleaser? Were it the Church walls? or were it the ungodly Priests, or the ceremonies, or vestments, which converted souls from sin? Please to observe what you can but know. God put his Spirit upon his servants and sent them forth into the highways and hedges to proclaim his name to lost sinners; sinners were awakened, made sensible of their sinfulness, and then applied to those messengers of truth, crying, What shall we do to be saved? The servants of God immediately pointed them to the blood of sprinkling shed for a ruined world,

Each felt it apply'd, and joyfully cry'd,
Me, me thou hast lov'd, and for me thou hast dy'd.

That they might be helpers of their faith, they joined them into Society, and gave them such advice as they saw necessary from time to time; they directed them to search the Scriptures, and wrote and published different Tracts to explain and enforce the truths of God upon their souls. Thus they taught them publicly and privately, yea, personally, and this method of dealing with them was what God blessed to them. They exhorted them to abide in Christ, not to grieve his Spirit, but to hold fast the beginning of their confidence steadfast unto the end. Now there was nothing of the Church in all this any more than in a Turkish Mosque, or an Indian Pagod. Their eyes being open they saw the Lord's Supper was an ordinance of Christ; yet they saw it was an ordinance of Communion; but they saw that neither the ministers nor people were such, as they could have any fellowship with any more than the Temple of God could have fellowship with Idols,

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or Christ with Baial; and therefore repeatedly applied to those to whom the dispensation of the gospel was committed, to give them the Lord's Supper; this being repeatedly denied them, many withdrew, and either called ministers to themselves, or joined with such as they believed were called of God, or were driven to seek Communion among the different denominations now abounding in England. Now we want to prevent that dispersion, by being united and having our own ministers to administer every ordinance to us, and to preach to us at such convenient hours, as that we can bring our families to hear them.

But it has been said, "That the Methodists and the Preachers going to Church, induces the Church people to come to hear the preaching, and thereby they do good." So then we must go to Church out of policy. Hear this ye Church-men! But is this walking uprightly according to truth? Is it not walking in craftiness, and according to the maxims of the world? But let it be right or wrong as to the morality of it, it is not true in fact. Have not those Preachers who avow their liberality of sentiment as many hearers as the most vehement Church-men? Let matter of fact speak? Had not Mr. *Whitfield* as many hearers as any man in England? And have not many who are living now as many hearers as those who make the greatest noise about the Church? Nay the method which they pursue is the most eligible way to gain hearers, yea, and doers of the work too; and we think they have as good success in the work of the ministry.

"But the Methodist Preachers will be hurt by baptizing and administering the Lord's Supper, it will puff them up with pride, and make them think more highly than they ought

ought to think." Does this objection come from such as love the Preachers, or from such as are sour and prejudiced against them, and who are pleased to see them in a state of contempt? Can such objectors believe God hath accounted them faithful, putting them into the ministry? And hath our Saviour intrusted them in the greatest of all works, a dispensation of the word, and gave them abilities to divide it according to truth; to feed the flock of God; to bring out of their treasure things new and old; to set life and death before mankind; to handle all the great doctrines of the Gospel, such as the rebellion through the fall, and reconciliation of man through the grand atonement; repentance, faith, and the new birth, together with all which appertain to the christian warfare, and what belong to every relative station of the christian; can he intrust them with all this, and much more connected therewith, and cannot he trust a little bread and water, or wine into their hands? The thought is absurd; it is irrational, and unscriptural, and reflects upon the wisdom of God as well as upon his servants. Where has God divided the work? Where has he made it the duty of one man to give himself up to the ministry of the word, and to give up secular life to preach the word, and not to dispense the lower parts of the ministry? In what part of God's word do we find such a distinction? In what Church History do we read it? Is it not odd that neither the Apostles, nor primitive Christians nor even our reformers could find out this singular Secret, till late in the eighteenth century a few plain, warm Church-men should have the Sagacity to discover it! But we have not so learned the Oracles of God; nor can we think thus meanly of those whom God

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has set over us. We grudge them no honour which God has conferred upon them; and this we are taught in his word; Let the elders who rule well be accounted worthy of double honour, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO LABOUR IN THE WORD AND DOCTRINE, or *teaching* * as some render the word. But our new refiners are of a different mind, for they say, let those who labour in the word and teaching be kept down, kept humble, let us beware of giving any honour instead of double honour, yea, let God's honour and ordinances be prophaned, lest we should lift up those men whom God has honoured in being the instruments of our Salvation. Such are the sentiments of those who wish to take from God's servants the honour and office which he has put upon them. In the same light every itinerant Preacher must view most of those circular letters which have been sent up and down the kingdom, a more insolent affront was never cast upon a set of useful men from the day that Methodists have had a name to the present hour. All the mobs and tumults which they have been in, all the lies and slanders which have been cast upon them, never brought so horrid an odium upon them, as the men of their own household have. These undermine their reputation in the most sensible part; they labour to invalidate their call to the ministry, and thereby make them a set of vagabonds, imposters, mere imposers upon mankind. Now what can Satan do more? Such a procedure will serve his cause more effectually than all the rabble in the world. Can we be guilty of such barefaced ingratitude both to God and man? God sent these men into the highways

* Διδασκαλία, 1 Tim. v. 17.

highways and hedges, in the face of persecution and danger, we ran to hear and see what was the matter, and we were soon convinced that we were ruined sinners, and that they were the servants of the Most High sent to shew us the way to salvation. Thus our faith came by hearing the word of truth, and not by going to Church. However, If any find benefit at Church, let them go thither, as they ought to be the best judges of their own state; but they must grant us the same privileges which they assume to themselves. We only apologize for ourselves, we plead our privileges as the just right of mankind, more especially as Englishmen, and who are favoured with Toleration; and it seems not a little strange that Methodists should be the only persons in the land who would light up the flames of persecution who have scarcely emerged from it themselves, and who are sheltered under the Act of Toleration.

The ministers putting on gowns and bands, and being filed, Reverend, is a frightful circumstance in the way of those who are so grateful as to look upon them with an evil eye. This objection comes with a very bad grace from such as make it; for if gowns or any thing of the kind be wrong, why are they so fond of going to the Places where they are sure the performers will be thus arrayed? I am pretty clear the first preachers of the Gospel had no particular dress, but that of sound doctrine and upright conduct, except suffering for their master. At what time particular habits were introduced is very uncertain, they created much contention at the Reformation, and for many years after. I have heard Mr. *Wesley* say, that the gown and cassock, now worn by the established clergy, was the invention of *Calvin*, therefore we may
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suppose they do not pretend to wear it *jure divino*, seeing Calvin was a Presbyterian; of course there can be no presumption or sacrilege in the preachers to put it on. I believe in general the Presbyterian Ministers do preach in a gown and cassock, yea, and they baptize, and deliver the Lord's Supper, as well as the Independants, and who are so ignorant as to charge them with presumption! But as to the *jus divinum* of garments, I scarcely think it will be contested; It is very likely many of the Preachers will never put them on, believing them to be the relicks of Popery; but if any congregation chuse to accomodate their minister with a particular garment, as thinking it will make a more respectable appearance, we see no harm in it, it is what is done now by Dissenters of most denominations, so that there is no sort of harm in this either one way or the other.

As for the term Reverend, can the objectors tell what it means? If they cannot they had as good say nothing about it. It comes from the Latin word *Revereor*, to revere or reverence, and according to the courtesy of every country where it is given to the Preachers of the Gospel, it respects the Sacredness of their Office, to signify that they are revered on that account. This being its simple meaning, I ask where is the impropriety of giving it to such as deserve it? Whether does it more properly belong to such as devote their whole time and strength to the work of the ministry, or to such as spend a great part of their time in luxury, in cards, plays, races, and various other evils. It seems the objectors are very far run for reasons to stoop to such pitiful pretences, and great numbers plainly evidence they are ashamed of nothing which is scurrilous, or it would be beneath them to expose their own

own ignorance so much in bringing forward reasons so contemptible, and what I really should not have thought worth attention, only it is become the common cuckoo note of many that can say nothing else.

The present age seems full of enterprize, and persons are not satisfied to take things upon trust. Reason, or common sense, is not to be put off with trite maxims, or superannuated customs, not even *old plans, or ways that have been blessed?* No, men will look for themselves; we see it so in trade and commerce; had old plans been the rule, what a condition had this kingdom been in by this time? Half its inhabitants must have wandered far and wide to have sought a miserable pittance to keep life and soul together; and yet we find numbers roaring and raging, and ready to raise a riot against every improvement, as though they were going to be ruined because it is a deviation from some *old plan*.

All national religions have been national tyrannies, whether Pagan, Jewish, Turkish, or what is called the Christian Religion; and it is sure to have the majority whether it be right or wrong. A very small acquaintance with our English History will convince us of this.

From the year 1530 to the year 1558 there were four general conversions in the land. In 1530, King Henry the Eighth grew weary of his wife, and wanted another, and because the Pope would not divorce him from his Queen, he was determined to divorce the Pope, and became Pope himself, and therefore required all his Subjects, Lords Spiritual and Lords Temporal, with the Clergy and Commons of the realm, to abjure Pope Clement, and install Pope Henry. It was done, and the King's

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bloody articles were sworn to, and a very few had the fortitude to suffer death, rather than swear and act contrary to their Conscience. Upon the death of that furious King, and the accession of Edward his Son, things took another turn, an entire revolution took place. Transubstantiation, Purgatory, with the greatest part of the Superstitions of Rome were discarded. Here again was a general veering of Lords Spiritual and temporal, &c. except a very few who were hardy enough to die. Upon the decease of that excellent young Prince, Mary mounted the throne, and thus every thing turned back into the Popish channel, *the old Plan* obtained the ascendancy, the Pope's Supremacy with all the infamous lumber of idolatry, attended with its usual cruelty and persecution, and in the general the Lords Spiritual, &c. were as obsequious as usual, only by reading the Scriptures, and the preaching which had been in the preceding reign, numbers were more enlightened, and had tasted the good word of God so that some hundreds laid down their lives. But what were they to the nation at large? that poor tool of tyranny and idolatry being removed her sister succeeded her, not possessing one spark more of real Religion, but possessed much more policy and ambition, the wheels turned round again, and that with as general a conformity, so that in the space of twenty-eight years the national Church was converted, and reconverted four times; but mark, let it be Papist or Protestant, or a medley of both, it was always true to what I have observed, to wit, tyranny and persecution. I wish every Englishman to be perfectly acquainted with that period and what was transacted, so that he might see the absurdities people run into when traditions are set up in
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stead of the word of God. What unremitting persecutions followed, excepting the time of the Common-wealth, I have already touched, till the happy Era of 1688, a period that all lovers of the Bible and Religion have abundant reason to bless God for; and let all the followers of the Prince of peace be very fearful how they attempt to fasten a galling yoke upon their brethren, or to lord it over the consciences of those whom their Saviour hath set free.

“ But the Preachers baptizing, and administering the Sacrament will destroy the itinerant plan; they will want to settle with the principal Congregations, and then they will grow as formal as others.” There is no ground for this fear: we do not know one Preacher who has the smallest intention of the kind. In the general, when they have been two years in any place, they are very willing to remove. They see examples enough both in the established Clergy and the Dissenters, of many of their hearers being weary of them, and of their being of very little use after their remaining several years in a place, although those Ministers may be good men and such as preach the truth, and I dare say, some of them are heartily weary of their station. Besides, many of the Methodist Chapels are so settled that no Preacher can stay above three years, and in many not above two, and in some they can dismiss him at the end of one if they choose.

Thus provision is made for the continuance of the itinerant plan, so that if any drone has a mind to lounge away his life in one place he cannot. As for those who have spent their strength in their master's work, and are worn out in the honourable service, every Preacher contributes annually one guinea from his small income towards their main-

tenance, and though this would fall short, yet kind Providence has put it into the hearts of many, both in the Society, and such as hear them, to contribute very generously; so that these worn-out veterans may sit down, and just preach as much as they are able in whatever part of the kingdom they chuse to end their days. Thus the travelling plan will be kept up without doubt. A most excellent scheme indeed: the various gifts are so diffused and blended among the people that each has a portion given them in due season. In this the Methodists are privileged above all other people. May they improve by this as well as every other means which they enjoy!

III. I shall now make some Remarks on a nameless Pamphlet which issued from *Liverpool*, in January last. This production consists of Mr. *Wesley's* reasons against separation (printed many years ago in the height of his Church zeal, and nearly given up in his latter writings) Some partial extracts from the last Journal, and a scurrilous pamphlet published and despised in the year 1786. and a reference to a Sermon from Heb. v. 4.

Whatever bears Mr. *Wesley's* name I shall always honour; I honoured him while living, above all men in the world, his memory will be dear to me while I live. In essential matters I cordially agree with him; in circumstances he allowed me to think and act for myself, or I could not have continued in connection with him. I did not hide my sentiments from either him or the conference. I was under no temptation or necessity to do it. But it may not be amiss to premise two things, the first is Mr. *Wesley's* definition of the Church of England. "The
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19th article defines a true Church to be a *Congregation of faithful people wherein the pure word of God is preached and the Sacraments duly administered*. According to this account, the Church of England is, that body (or holy believers) in England among whom the pure word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered.* In another place he asserts, that the "Church of England; are all the Believers in England."† If that is the case then I aver, we are the Church of England; for we preach the pure word of God to many faithful Companies, and what we plead for is, *duly* to administer the Sacraments to them.

SECONDLY, I premise, that let the Reasons be what they may, they were the Reasons of Messrs. *John* and *Charles Wesley* only, and only Subscribed by them, and therefore whatever obligations they might lay themselves under, from thence it only belonged to them to perform those obligations; they cannot affect any one else, of course these Reasons are in no wise binding to either Preachers or People, but solely to those who made and subscribed them. It may further be observed, except a man sets himself up to be infallible, he may with propriety change his judgment when he sees clearer, for that is only acknowledging that he is wiser to-day than he was yesterday. Therefore if Mr. *Wesley* has varied from the subsequent Reasons it is but granting him the right which belongs to

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* See 4th Journal, and the Appeals.

† Magazine for Jan. 1786.

every man who allows himself to be fallible: this may suffice for an answer to the first Reason. The 2d, 3d, 4th, and 5th, Reasons are nearly alike, viz. " giving offence, hindering people from coming to hear and causing others to separate from us, &c.

The answer is very easy. In things of an indifferent nature it is wise not to give offence; but I apprehend the avowed essentials of Religion, and the Solemn ordinances of God are not indifferent matters; nor are we at liberty to change them, or make them subservient to State Policy or worldly maxims, in so doing we should adulterate the word of God, and thereby make it of none effect. As for giving offence we cannot help that; we know the carnal mind is enmity against God, and so is the friendship of the world. The messages the Prophets were charged with are often stiled *burdens*, because they were calculated to give offence, yet they were charged to be faithful in delivering them. In Deut. iv. 2. and xii, 32. Rev. xxii. 18. 19. Likewise Jer. i. 7. Ezek. xxxiii. 1, 10. Did not our Lord give offence both in life and doctrine? Did he not say, I am come to send fire on Earth? * Yet he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and in his mouth was no guile. Did not his Apostles give offence? and who were more offended than the Jews, especially their Rulers and Teachers? and did not our Lord say, they were blind leaders of the blind, and that both should fall into the ditch; the ditch of error here, and into eternal perdition hereafter. Did not the primitive Christians
give

* Luke xii. 49, 54.

give offence? As likewise the *Waldenses* and *Albigenses*, those first Reformers from Popery and Superstition. Did not *Luther* and all the Reformers give offence? Did not the Nonconformists give offence; yea even Mr. *Wesley's* Ancestors, his great Grandfather, *Bartholomew Wesley*; his Grandfather, *John Wesley*; and his Grandfather by his Mother, Dr. *Annesley*; Did not these men give offence to Church Bigots, for which they suffered the spoiling of their goods, yea moreover bonds and imprisonment. And finally, I ask who has given greater offence in this age than Mr. *Wesley* himself? Let any one read his Journals, and his Appeals, and they will find all manner of evil spoken against him, and often-times violence offered to his person; so that whatever he may have said of his being Churchman has not taken away the scandal of the Cross.

REASON 6th. "Because it would be throwing balls of wild fire among them that are quiet in the land." "Balls of wild fire! What enforcing the plain Scripture Doctrines, and plain Scripture Discipline! Certainly such are balls of GOD's own making, namely that pure truth should be held forth, and in such a case we are not answerable for the consequences. This Reason is pretty much like the former.

REA. 7th. "Controversy is now asleep!" No, Sir, not that Controversy, witness the numbers which Church Bigotry has driven from us, and is daily driving from us. Witness the numbers of Chapels built in various parts of England by such as have been thus driven away for want of liberty of Conscience!

Ibid. "O what would many of our fore-fathers have given

given to have enjoyed so blessed a calm?" *Answer.* All they had in the world except a good Conscience; yea many of them did so, witness your Great-grandfather and your two Grandfathers. But who took that *calm*, that Birth-right of every human being, from them? Who banished, fined, and imprisoned your Fore-fathers, and thousands besides, were they not the unmerciful Bigots of the day? and whose offsprings are itching to follow their steps? only there is that plaguy obnoxious act of Toleration in the way.

Ibid. "It would engage me in a thousand controversies, both in public and in private." *Answer.* No, Sir, not half so many as the steps which you have taken in acting throughout a Dissenter and yet calling yourself a Churchman; such a procedure is much harder to defend than honestly avowing that you were a Dissenter. This would only be asserting your privilege as a Minister of the New Testament, and more especially as an Englishman. It is to the honour of your venerable Ancestors that they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods and endured Bonds and Imprisonments for the sake of a good Conscience, I wish you had never been ashamed neither of the name nor nature of a Nonconformist. A Dissenter you were; God made you such, and therein owned your labour, for which thousands will bless his holy name to all eternity.

REA. 8th. "To form the plan of a New Church would require infinite time and care, &c.

Answer. "A New Church!" What is that? As good talk of a new World, or a New God! Have you not often asserted, that "the visible Church of Christ is a company

pany of faithful men where the pure Gospel is preached and the Ordinances be duly administered." I hope many companies of faithful men and women too are raised up in various parts of the Kingdom. What then is our duty? to preach the *pure Gospel* to them, and *duly administer the Sacraments according to Christ's Ordinance*. The latter of these implies the order and discipline that is to be observed in the House of God, and that will require no more trouble than we have at present; for I hope we have not any in the Society but such as we can admit to the Lord's Supper.

REA. 9th. "Separation will cause Prejudice against the Clergy, &c." *Answer*. Do not the Doctrines which they teach, and the lives which they live do this more than all the Methodists put together? By their own mouths and actions they are condemned. And I know none who hath written sharper things against them or bestowed keener Epithets, except the Bible, than Mr. Wesley himself has, when he calls them *Heathenish Priests*, *Mitred Infidels*, and has *been in doubt forty years what obedience he owes them*, and the obedience which he gives them has been with a *doubling Conscience*." Surely this is saying enough in all reason. If one wish to see more let him read Mr. Wesley's Appeals and his Address to the Clergy, and several of his Journals.

REA. 10th. and 11th. These are nearly alike, "Because the experiment has been so frequently tried already, and the success never answered the expectation."—"We have melancholy instances of this," &c.

Answer. Where has it been fairly tried without success?

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Is it in *London*? where it has been about forty years. Why have you not given it up then? Is it in *Bristol*? Why did you continue it? Is it in *Plymouth Dock*, were it encreased the Society near 400? Is it at *Nottingham*, or *Birmingham*, or *Sheffield*? Is it at *Altringham*, *Delph*, *Bradshaw*, or *Hunslet*? in all which places the Service has been in Church hours for years? Is it in *America* or the *West-Indies*? Is it in *Scotland*? Perhaps it may be said it has been hurtful in *Dublin*. Pray, if so, who was the cause of the hurt? Were it not the furious Bigots in the Society? The case was then as if I should take a particular method in cultivating my field, but my neighbour says, I take a wrong method; and insists I shall not vary the method which has been taken for years past, because that has brought forth some fruit: and to make good his usurped power and dogmatical advice, he raises a mob, obstructs me in my work, pulls down my fences, roots up my plants, and then exclaims my land has been barren since I adopted the new method. Such was the case in *Dublin*. A number of Zelots were determined to have their own way right or wrong, and the Preachers were soft enough to give way to them.

REA. 12th. "By such a separation we should throw away the peculiar glory which God has given us."

Answer. The peculiar glory which God has given us is, saving Souls, not by going to Church, but by preaching the Gospel to every child of man, in the Church or not in the Church; but our greatest obstruction in that blessed work has been from Churchmen.

ibid. "And we have no desire to be a distinct or compact Body." Then why are we legally made so by our Enrollment in the High Court of Chancery? *Ibid.*

Ibid. " We look upon the Clergy, not only as a part of these our Brethren, but as that part whom God by his adorable Providence has called to be Watchmen over the rest."

Answer. What are those *Heathenish Priests and Mitred Infidels* your Brethren? And are they such as these, " whom God by his adorable Providence has called to be Watchmen over the rest?" In what part of the Bible is this strange Doctrine written? I thought the like of these had run tho' God had not sent them.*

Ibid. " To express either contempt or bitterness towards them betrays AN UTTER IGNORANCE OF OURSELVES."

Answer. Can any thing be more contemptuous than the terms *Heathenish Priest*, or *Mitred infidel*? And is not that the character which Mr. *Wesley* gives them, and was he UTTERLY IGNORANT OF HIMSELF?

Ah, my venerable and much esteemed Father, these thy pretended friends have done thy memory the greatest injury they possibly could. They, in an evil hour, fixed upon the only material thing wherein thou wert inconsistent in thy vast labours for more than fifty years, and in thy voluminous writings. In the warmth and simplicity of thy heart, in the beginning of thy days thou didst express thyself a little unwarily, and thy bigotted friends would not allow thee second thoughts, but are determined in words to make thee contradict the whole tenor of thy useful life, and unparalleled labours. Methinks these like

Saul

* *Jer.* xxiii. 32.

Saul and the *witch of Ender*, have conspired to disturb thy peaceful spirit, and couldst thou lift up thy Reverend head from the tomb wouldst say with the blessed Prophet, *Why have ye disquieted me to bring me up*: Honoured Servant of God! Sorry am I that the smallest blemish should be cast upon thy memory, nor should it have been done by me were not the honour and glory of thy ever adorable Master and Lord concerned therein!

With regard to what Mr. *Charles* says at the end of the twelve Reasons, it is very observable that his conduct for many years contradicted it. For I ask, Did he ever go to Church, for many years, except some very chance time when he has been invited to preach in a Church? Did he not, when in *London*, constantly preach, in Church hours, in that Dissenting Chapel in the *City Road*, or in that other Dissenting Chapel at *West-street*? When in *Bristol*, did he not preach in that Dissenting Chapel in the *Horse Fair*, and at that other Dissenting Chapel at *Kingswood*?*

Mr. *Wesley's* farther thoughts of Separation are nearly granting all I wished for, nearly yielding up the contest. He calls it a partial separation; and after mentioning the just cause of such as withdraw from the works and workers of darkness, he says, "I believe to separate from these miserable wretches, who are the scandal of our Church and Nation, would be for the honour of our Church, as well as for the glory of God. And this is no ways contrary to the Profession which I have made this fifty years."

Indeed

* See Page 9th.

Indeed considering what Mr. *Wesley* has both said and done it was absolutely necessary to make this concession.

This may cast some light upon what is meant by the Conference agreeing several times not to separate from the Church, namely an avowed separation, so as not to admit Members into the Society unless they would leave the Church, which is the case with most Dissenters if not all. But such a separation we have not pleaded for. What I have ever wished, as well as many of my Brethren, is liberty of Conscience, to have such a Service and such a People as we can join in communion with, allowing others the same privilege. When any thing has been argued, or voted in conference contrary to this birth-right of every human being, I ever gave my vote against it. Therefore wherever the sanction of conference is brought in as not approving of a separation, it is that general avowed separation which will admit no Members into the Society, but such as will leave the Church; and such a separation I will vote against this day. There is a passage or two taken out of the last Journal which are not fairly stated, because what is said afterwards of those places should be attended unto.

Page 7th. 1786. "I went to *Brentford*, the Society is almost dwindled away. What have we gained by separating from the Church?"

Answer. Was not the Society at *Brentford* almost dwindled to nothing before they separated, and was not that the cause of so doing? And has it not answered a valuable end? We find in the same Journal Mr. *Wesley's* voice is changed; for he says, 1789. Feb, 11. "I went

to *Brentford* and found the Society still alive, and increasing both in strength and number."

The Quotation concerning *Deptford* has the same disingenuousness in it. Mr. *Wesley* came to *Deptford*, Jan. 2. and in his strong language says he had got among a Den of Lions; that is, they saw the work droop and wished to take more effectual means to revive it; and it seems these Lions soon became Lambs; for on the fifteenth day of the same month he came thither and found them in peace and love with each other, and he granted them their reasonable request, they have had the Service in the Church hours, and it is now the best Society and Congregation in *London* Circuit, except *London* itself.

1787. Nov. 4. "In *London* the Congregation was as usual large and serious. But there is no increase in the Society; so that we have profited nothing by having Service in Church hours." This is wrong, whether from ignorance or design I know not. The place referred to is *Dorking* and not *London*, nor was it on Sunday, Nov. 4. but Monday Nov. 5. He tells you that on Sunday, Nov. 4. the Number of Communicants was so great that he was obliged to consecrate thrice; and mark, the Sacrament was in Church hours, so that it seems it answers the design in *London* by the great increase of Communicants. And even in *Dorking*, where he was on the Monday, the Congregation was large and serious, which was no bad sign, and as to the increase of the Society, Mr. *Wesley's* stay was so short that he could not be well acquainted with it; and the time of their having Service in Church hours so short that no great change could be expected.

Throughout

Throughout this Journal I have remarked, that wherever the Service has been set up in Church hours, Mr. *Wesley* has confirmed it by having Service in those places at those hours if he has happened to be at the place on the Lord's day, yea he has begun it in one or more places where it never had been at those hours before.

I have now taken notice of all that is material in the above pamphlet; as for the latter part called *Free Thoughts, &c.* I shall leave it to its own merit, that is, Scurrility, Impudence, and Bombast.

It has been observed Mr. *Wesley* was educated in high Church Principles, and was strongly attached to them till God taught him better. He retained all the fundamental Doctrines of the Church to the end of his life; he also loved the Liturgy of the Church, for the most part, especially the Prayers; but he certainly was under a necessity to act as a Dissenter in many respects, or he would have done very little good, he would have been tied hand and foot. But that he acted as a Dissenter is certain, and he is obliged tacitly to acknowledge it in several instances. Indeed the Canons* require so strict obedience from every Clergyman to their Ordinary, that almost every step Mr. *Wesley* has taken has been in opposition thereunto.

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1st.

* Let one Canon speak for many. Canon 12. *Whofoever shall affirm, that it is lawful for any sort of Ministers or Lay Persons to make Rules, Orders, and Constitutions, in Causes Ecclesiastical without the King's Authority, and shall submit to be ruled and governed by them, let him be excommunicated ipso facto and not restored but only by the Archbishop after his repentance and public revocation of his wicked Error.* Thus we see that Mr. *Wesley* was liable to a most terrible excommunication, for he made Rules without the King's Authority.

1st. By preaching in all parts of England, both in the open air and in houses, without licence from any Bishop or Archbishop.

2d. By erecting Societies, independent of the Bishops, and bringing them under Rules and Discipline of his own.

3d. By having Chapels built, and preaching and administering the Lord's Supper in them without their being consecrated.

4th. By admitting men to preach who were not ordained by a Bishop; calling a Synod every year, and calling every Preacher to an account concerning his Conduct and Doctrine, and then appointing them their destination the ensuing year; sending them into all parts of the Land, yea and into other Lands also; a more extensive Jurisdiction than any Bishop ever assumed, except the Bishop of Rome.

5th. By formally ordaining men, not only to preach but also, to administer the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

6th. By constantly preaching and administering the Lord's Supper in those Dissenting Chapels in *Spittle-fields*, *West-street*, and the *City-road*, when in *London*.

If all this does not make a man a Dissenter, it is hard to tell what does. Nay I will appeal to all the Universities in Christendom, and to all the Divines and Civilians in the Land, and if they will not announce Mr. *Wesley* and all the preachers in connection with him Dissenters, I will promise to preach no more.

Nay, we cannot preach but as Dissenters, we are liable to a fine, and the Houses in which we preach are liable to

be

be fined as well as our hearers without being licenced, *yes* and licenced as Dissenters; nay, Mr. *Wesley* himself was liable to this, and so is every Clergyman who goes beyond the bounds of his Jurisdiction. It was but a little before Mr. *Wesley*'s death that he knew all this, and admired the Providence of God that we have been so favourably dealt with, seeing matters stood thus. That Mr. *Wesley* was thus a Dissenter will be matter of Praise to thousands, that he denied himself to be in any wise such was his weakness, and laid him under much inconvenience.

IV. I come now to pay some attention to a Sermon published in the Armenian Magazine for *May* and *June*, 1790. What I have principally to say upon that Sermon, is contained in a Letter which I wrote to Mr. *Wesley* soon after the Sermon was published. It is the only Copy which I have preserved of any Letter which I ever wrote to that venerable man of God. I wish I had preserved the Copies of some scores which I have written to him during the last twenty years. However, it may be necessary to prefix a few hints which may be explanatory of some things which are only hinted at, or darkly referred to in the following Letter.

Numbers have very ignorantly made a Gospel Ministry analagous to the Jewish Priesthood; and hence such among the preachers as have thought it their duty to administer the Ordinances of the New Testament have been blamed for aspiring to the Priesthood, and have been kindly compared to *Korah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram*. Hence I assert, that the Jewish Priesthood has nothing to do with a Gospel Ministry, but that it had its full and final accomplish-

ment in our great High Priest, and that the Preachers cannot be seeking that which has no existence. It has been asserted that our Lord has formed the New Testament Church in its worship and ordinances, after the model of the Old: this is denied in the Letter. Some have condemned our Brethren for being self-righteous, because they scrupled to join in communion with notorious and impenitent Sinners, and have objected to them that Text, *Iſa.* lxxv. 5. "Stand by thyself, I am holier than thou." In the Letter I observe, we might as well be blamed for refusing improper persons admittance into our Love Feasts.

Some years ago it was debated in the Conference, whether we should not administer the Lord's Supper to such as objected going to Church, some few Preachers were against it; Mr. *Wesley* was more moderate, and thought the time was not yet come, and that we should follow the openings of Providence. One thing brought on another, so that some enquired if the Preachers had a right to administer the Ordinances; I appealed to Mr. *Wesley* whether he could find any such thing in Scripture, or in the whole compass of Church History, that men who allowed the necessity of the New Testament Ordinances, being called to preach the Gospel, yea, to give their whole time to the Work, and to have no right to administer those Ordinances. I do not remember him ever being at so great a loss for an answer. He ingenuously confessed he did not recollect any such thing. But he immediately added, here is a new thing in the Earth, God carries on his Work by men who do not administer the Ordinances. This circumstance is the thing referred to
where

where I say, "It is a new thing, utterly unknown to the Apostles, but it is no better for that."

All the high Churchmen build much upon their *Jus Divinum*, or their divine right. This fable, as Mr. Wesley justly calls it, is founded upon the notion of the uninterrupted succession, (down from the Apostles to the present Bishops) a circumstance which, if allowed, must give no small weight in the Scale of Popery. But whatever plea the Papists may have in that imagination, surely it will not become Protestants to make use of it, seeing that when they abjured a Popish *Jus Divinum*, they could only adopt a *Jus Humanum*, except what they can derive from the Oracles of God. The *Jus Divinum* has been a most terrible engine of persecution, both in the hands of Papists, Churchmen, and even Presbyterians; for it is very remarkable, that during the little time the Presbyterians mounted the Saddle in England, their heads got turned by the *Jure Divino*, that they were determined to adopt it also; and upon this despotic, persecuting principle, their solemn League and Covenant is formed, and it was one of their capital objections against Cromwell, that he would not abet them therein. This is still a farther proof to me that all National Religions have been National Tyrannies, even among what have been called Christians, whether they be called Papists, Churchmen, or Presbyterians. And must the fingers of a few poor Methodists be itching to pluck the same bloody Fruit! Must they set up an Image and summon all the Provinces to bow down to it? Let them look at the lines quoted in the 9th Page. Let them enjoy their privileges
with

with thankfulness, without putting a yoke upon their necks. Will they imitate the unbelieving Jews, of whom it is said, *they tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.** And is not lacing up men's Consciences with positive dogmas, *a tempting God, a limiting the Holy One of Israel?* Is it not saying to the Almighty, hitherto shalt thou go and no farther; and here shall thy Omnipotent Hand be stayed! Is such a spirit or procedure becoming poor worms of the Earth? I would ask our angry Brethren, how would they like it, supposing they were constrained to leave the Church? Would they take it patiently? Would they not think it a hardship? But to return from this digression.

Mr. *Wesley* calls the vain notion of uninterrupted succession a Fable; he may well say so. Any one who has read the History of the Popes or Councils will do the same: For there have been two, three, yea four Popes at a time, and each of their parties fighting for them, and the party that prevailed bore away the triple Crown, till a stronger, or more crafty Competitor, with a battle-axe, or poison, made him give way. Such is the *Jus Divinum*, and such is the uninterrupted succession; a bloody fountain which has sent out bloody streams in all directions. This being the case, every man is called to prove his divine right from the Bible; and if so, the man who can prove his divine right to preach the Gospel from the Bible, will prove his divine right to administer every Ordinance in the New Testament. Also he may put on a Surplice, a Gown, a Rochet, or a Fool's Coat and Cap.

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too if he please, provided that he comes honestly by it. Let the Preacher have *Grace, Gifts, and Fruit* of his labour, and such an one will be found an able Minister of the New Testament, a workman whom God will honour, and will prove himself as really called of God to be a Minister of the Gospel of Christ, as Aaron was called of God to be the High Priest of Israel of old.

The judicious Reader will see in the following Letter some things hinted which have been pretty largely treated of before; but his candour will excuse that, as there is a kind of necessity for it. The ensuing Letter will be one proof from some hundreds of my undisguised dealings with that venerable Servant of the Most high, and may answer the liberal remarks of some who ask "What can they not let Mr. *Wesley* be cold in his grave before they throw off the mask and destroy all that has been doing these fifty years?" I had no mask to throw off, I had no temptation to put one on; I am endeavouring to do in my little way what he has been doing these fifty years, namely calling Sinners to repentance, comforting Mourners, building up Believers, by preaching the Gospel, administering Baptism and the Lord's Supper, visiting the Sick, &c. &c. Many of my Brethren, whose praise is in the Churches, mean to do the same.

To the Reverend JOHN WESLEY,

Hull, May 29th, 1790.

Rev. and Dear Sir,

I beg leave to offer you a few plain free thoughts on your Sermon from *Heb. v. 4.* and as I sincerely reverence you above all men under the Sun, I never wish to say,

say, or write any thing that would grieve you; and if I here use great plainness, I entreat you to read it with patience. You very justly observe, that such as object this Text against Men preaching, who are not ordained by a Bishop, mistake its meaning.—Indeed they do, for it has no kind of reference, or connection with a Gospel Ministry at all, and I am sorry that you bring it in for that purpose, in the latter part of your Sermon, almost in the very same sense that the writers you oppose do. Indeed, Sir, the whole dispensation of the Levitical Priesthood ended when our great High Priest entered the holy place, not made with hands, after he had purged our Sins, and was sat down on the right hand of God. Nor do I find the New Testament authorize us to call any Office among men by the name of Priesthood. We do not find the least trace of it among the Apostles. Nay, to put an end to that, the true, real High Priest, did not spring from the Tribe of Levi, from whence the Priests could only be chosen, but from the Tribe of Judah, from which Tribe no man gave attendance at the Altar. Therefore I utterly deny any Priesthood in being among men, except that made mention of, 1 *Peter* ii. 9.—of course the Preachers cannot seek that which is abolished and remains no more; therefore confounded be the man, or men, who take upon them the honour which belongs only to the Man *Christ Jesus*. So far was our Lord from modelling the New Testament Church after that of the Old, that he refused to be of the Tribe of Levi, and chose the Tribe of Judah; nor has he, nor any of the Apostles, retained one name belonging to the Offices of the Old Testament Service, except that of Minister, a
 very

very general Term. I cannot agree with you, Sir, in the manner in which you distinguish between Pastor and Evangelist. You set the Pastor over the Evangelist; whereas, if there were any preeminence it was in the Evangelist. You seem to intimate, that the Evangelist was only a kind of an assistant to the Pastor; indeed, Sir, that cannot be. What was the Office of Timothy? was he not an Evangelist? so the Apostle intimates, *do the work of an Evangelist*—and was Timothy no more than an assistant to a Pastor? (which I really think was somewhat analagous to what we call a local Preacher) nay, Sir, you know Timothy appointed those Pastors or Elders, therefore his station could not be inferior to theirs. Timothy had it in charge to watch over those Pastors, both as to their Life and Doctrine, and was to be careful who he admitted into that Office. Titus was another Evangelist, and is said to have appointed those Pastors or Elders as he passed through the Cities; but Titus was not inferior to those Pastors which he himself had appointed or ordained. Moreover, if any attention is to be paid to the order in which the Apostle has arranged these different Offices in the Church, the Evangelists were superior to Pastors, *Eph. iv. 10*. If the Pastors had a right to administer Ordinances, surely the Evangelists had a right to do the same. With regard to the term, *called of God*, I am fully persuaded that no man ought to take upon him the honour of preaching or administering the Ordinances, but he that is called of God; if he does he is an Innovator. My call in that matter cost me many a painful, solemn hour, and as I was pressed in spirit,

rit, I durst do no other, I was really constrained; the word of God was as a fire shut up in my bones, and it was nothing less than "Woe unto me if I preach not the Gospel," and I am still under the same burden, I cannot get from under it, or I should many times, but I dare not; for I verily believe I should perish if I did. Now, Sir, I always did, and still do, look upon preaching the Gospel, to be a work far superior to that of Administering the Ordinances, the man requires better abilities. We say in the minutes, he must not only have Grace, but Gifts, yea and Fruit too; and, dear Sir, point me out the place, or the man in the New Testament, who had a Commission to do the greater Work, and no power to do the less. But you say "herein God has wrought a new thing in the Earth"—viz. in appointing men to preach and debarring them the power of administering the Ordinances. Truly it is a new thing, utterly unknown to the Apostles; but is it any better for that? It is a new thing, but it is not the Lord's doing, though it be marvellous in our eyes. As for something like this obtaining in the Church of Scotland, it is very true it does; but those young men are only a kind of Probationers upon trial. I need not tell you, Sir, that there are no Pluralists in the Church of Scotland; every Parish has its own Minister, and every Minister administers the Lord's Supper to his own flock, and that they have that Ordinance very seldom, and at those times a number of neighbouring Ministers step in and assist them, so that there is no occasion for those Candidates to exercise in that capacity; but as soon as a Minister dies, one of these steps into his place, but that case differs

differs widely from the matter in hand. But now, dear Sir, in what I am going to say, have patience with me—Suppose I say Mr. *Wesley* is a Dissenter from the Church of England, I shall say truly. By the Church of England every body supposes you to mean the whole Hierarchy as it is by law established, not only in its Doctrines, but in its Government and Discipline, as containing a part of the Legislative Power, in the Civil State, as governed by Archbishops, &c. then, my dear Sir, are not you a Dissenter when you preach and administer the Lord's Supper in the New Chapel at *London*, or the Preaching House at *Bristol*, or *Leeds*? None of these places are consecrated, no Bishop has any Jurisdiction over them: there are Churches enough, and empty enough, both at *London* and *Bristol*, yet you do not attend any of them, except you are desired to preach in them. Is not this Dissenting? You call a Conference once a year, you admit men into the Ministry, so I call preaching the Gospel—you appoint men their Stations in that Work, and call them to an account for their Doctrine and Conduct; you send them all over the three Kingdoms, and into Foreign Parts, a wider Province than the Archbishop of *Canterbury* has, and I heartily wish it may be much wider still; but all this you cannot do as a Minister of the Church of England; you are not a Bishop in that connection? no Bishop has such power, therefore neither do they, nor can they delegate such Power to you; therefore herein you must act as a Dissenter. Nay, Sir, you have formally ordained men to administer the Ordinances, and this you must have done as a Dissenter it cannot be denied. You say in a former Magazine, namely, *Jan. 1786*, *For these forty years I have been in doubt concerning the Question "What*

obedience is due to Heathenish Priests and Mitred Infidels?"

But I hope, Sir, your doubts are now at an end; for it seems, in the above instances, you have given them up: but if any still remain, suffer me to ask, Do you, Sir, really believe that these *Heathenish Priests and Mitred Infidels* are called of God, as was *Aaron*, or *St. Paul*, or *Peter*? Do you think *St. Peter* or *Paul* would have laid hands on such men? I am glad you give up the Fable of the uninterrupted Succession; if so, what is all this stir of our "most excellent and Apostolical Church" for? I think sincerely as you say, viz. that you are a Scriptural Bishop as much as any man in England or Europe; and I will add, I believe you more so than any man in Europe—but then, my dear Sir, who made you a Bishop? for you are not made so by man. Was it not the great *Shepherd* and Bishop of Souls? And why has he made you a Bishop? that you may in every sense of the word magnify your Office. At present, the Methodists are divided into three Parties: one is vehement for the Church, and is for compelling others to be the same. These are turbulent and heady, and if they had power, would drive all Dissenters out of the World. These are ringing the Changes a thousand times in your ears, what you have said and written in times past, crying out like Doctor Sacheverell the danger the Church is in. A second Party are in a sort neuter, and think little about the matter, and seem for the strongest side. A third Party are such as wish to have free liberty of Conscience, and are quite willing that others should have the same, and would by no means put their Brethren from them, because they chuse to go to Church, and whose spirits I have seen different from the former, as light is from darkness.

Now,

Now, Sir, which of these have the greatest right on their side? Whose spirit do you approve? Which is the spirit most consistent with the Gospel?

I think we are in a very unsettled condition, and whenever it shall please God to call you away, it appears to me there will be great confusion, and such as desire to draw away Disciples after them will have, I think, a fair opportunity which might now be prevented.

I don't see that Text in *Isaiah*,—Stand by thyself, I am holier than thou, has any thing to do in regulating Church Discipline. Certainly care should be taken who are admitted to the Lord's Supper without subjecting them who are thus careful to that odium, or else why don't we let every body come to our Love Feasts? Is it not because we are sure they would do them more harm than good.

Do the Methodists in *America* thrive any worse for having the Ordinances? Did they ever prosper so well as they do at present? O Sir! much depends upon you in this matter, God has wrought a great Work in the Earth through your means, and you may still be the happy means of perpetuating it. I don't see that giving what I call a Toleration need make us any more a distinct sect, than what we are, or drive us into Deserts or Hermitages—No, it will prevent that, it would cut off all occasion of Separation, and lay a foundation for a lasting Union. Pardon, dear Sir, the length of this Letter, and believe me, with the greatest sincerity, to be your affectionate Son in the Gospel,

T. TAYLOR.

To what is remarked in the above Letter, I might observe *Aaron* pleaded no lineal succession, he was ap-

pointed of God to his work; so is every Minister of Christ. He is really moved by the Holy Ghost to take that Office and Ministry upon him; and no man taketh this honour upon himself, but he that is called of God to the Office of a Minister, as *Aaron* was to be a Priest. But that *Aaron's* Priesthood has nothing to do with the Ministry of the Gospel, is plain from several circumstances.

1st. The nature of the two Offices. *Aaron* was not called to preach the Gospel, nor did he ever do it. The two principal parts of his Office were to offer Sacrifice and Incense; and to sprinkle the blood upon the Mercy Seat, and thereby make Intercession for the people with Prayers and Supplications, and therein was a type of our ever adorable High Priest. But the Minister of the Gospel is to preach the glad tidings of Salvation in the name of his Saviour, to all the human race; to point them to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the Sins of the World.

To lead them to his open side,
The Sheep for whom the Shepherd dy'd."

He has nothing to do with the slaying of animals, or sprinkling of blood; but to set forth the victim already slain, the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than that of *Abel*. Even in the ordinance of Baptism, he must not forget that precious blood which purgeth the Conscience from dead Works to serve the living and true God. In the sacred Supper he eats and drinks in remembrance that Christ died for him; and to all who may communicate with him he sets forth the Lord's death until he come.

2. The different manner in which the Jewish High Priest, and the Gospel Minister are introduced into their respective

respective Offices, plainly evidences the difference in these Offices, and that one had no reference to the other. In the inducting *Aaron* into his Office, there were several victims to be slain, and their blood to be sprinkled upon him; and likewise the oil of consecration compounded according to divine appointment; and the different garments, and other circumstances were minutely and circumstantially pointed out, and nothing in the ceremonial to be omitted.*

In the ordaining of the Minister of Christ all that pomp is laid aside; nor do I apprehend the laying on of hands essentially necessary thereunto; if it had our Lord would undoubtedly have laid his blessed hands on his Apostles. He gave them their commission in great simplicity, and yet with great sublimity. Hear how it runs, *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me. Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the World.* Here is majesty, and yet simplicity becoming the Son of the Most High; and also that Gospel which is preached to the poor; and which is the power of God unto an endless life.†

3. Every Priest was not only to be of a certain tribe, but also of a certain family. None must presume to come nigh the Altar, but the family of *Aaron*, for it is often repeated, *And the stranger that draweth nigh shall be put to death.* But the Minister of the Gospel may be of any family, nation or country; it makes no matter neither of what coun-

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try,

* See xxviii Exodus throughout.

† Matt. xxviii. 18. 19. 20.

try, or kindred, or colour he may be; he may be Jew or Greek, bond or free, provided the spirit of the Lord be upon him for his Work. Only I would observe, that whomsoever our Lord sends forth he qualifies for the Work; he never sends those to preach who cannot preach; nor does he send ignorant or ungodly men to preach. Such have not his commission.

4. The Jewish Priest was to offer Sacrifices no where but in Jerusalem; it was said, to be the *place which the Lord chose to put his name there*, and thither all the Sacrifices were to be brought.* But the Minister of Jesus is to go into *all the World*; and as far as in his power lies to *preach the Gospel to every creature*. They were to preach repentance and remission of sins among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

5. The Levitical Priesthood was but for a limited time, and then finally to cease. But a Gospel Ministry, and consequently Gospel Ministers, must abide till the final dissolution of the World; and their Master has promised to be with them *alway even unto the end of the World*. A precious declaration indeed. O may I, and my dear fellow labourers, feel it always accomplished in us, and by us, till we finish our course with triumphant joy. Thus I think it sufficiently appears that a Gospel Ministry has nothing to do with the Levitical Priesthood, and therefore that text in the Hebrews is quite foreign to the service it is often pressed into. And even admitting it had any reference to a Gospel Minister, I think it would exclude great numbers who, with very great impropriety, object that passage to the itinerant Preachers. Let them consider the character of *Aaron*: he held close fellowship

with

* *Deut.* xii. 5, 6, 7.

with God, and received a commission from his Maker to go to *Pharaoh*, King of Egypt, long before he was appointed to the Office of High Priest.† *Aaron* was, in the general tenor of his conduct, holy, harmless, and undefiled; and hence he is stiled, *the Saint of the Lord*.‡ But does this suit the condition of thousands who are called, Clergy? Will their conduct bear any such description in any tollerable qualified sense of the word? Had *Aaron* been of the class of thousands, who, in modern language, are stiled, Bucks and Bloods; had he been a Racer, a Wencher, a Dicer, or Carder; had he been a Tavern-hunter, a Coffee-house Rake, a frequenter of Play-houses, ignorant of God, and a real despiser of experimental Religion, we should never have read of his being called of God to be a High Priest, he would never have had the honour of being a type of the great High Priest of our Salvation.

With regard unto the Church that there is so much noise about; who vindicate her Doctrines more than we do? And this we would do within their own walls if they would permit us. On the other hand, how many thousands, yea, I might say, millions, in England, who do not come to the Church once in a quarter of a year, but are spending the sacred day either in pleasure or business? I should really think these are the Dissenters, though they call themselves Churchmen. Look at the general tribe of Drunkards, Revellers, Sabbath-breakers, Profligates of all descriptions; yet I dare say, ninety-nine in the hundred of them call themselves Churchmen. I really think my Bible calls me to come out from among them, and to be

† *Exodus* iv. 27.

‡ *Psalms* cvi. 16.

be separated from them, so that I may not be a partaker of their evil deeds.

I would say, to all the Methodists, who deem it their duty to go to Church, beware of a persecuting Spirit; and beware of every thing which wears the appearance of compulsion; it strongly indicates, that if such had bonds and imprisonments at their command, they would put them in force against such as differ from them. What harm is done you? Is your eye evil because God is good? No one envies you the good which you get at the Church. But, my Brethren, would you be willing to be compelled to leave the Church? Would you not think it very hard? Think then for your Brethren, who have their reasons for not going thither. Besides, in all such cases, violent opposition always defeats its own intention. No one acts freely contrary to the judgment he has formed of a thing; and remember, *Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is Liberty.*

Let such as are willing to avail themselves of their privileges, and whose cause this Pamphlet pleads, be humble and thankful. They have no temptation now to be *carried about with divers and strange Doctrines*, seeing an open door is set before them; and as no man can shut it, let them be careful they do not shut it against themselves. Let them use their Liberty and not abuse it. Let them consider, that where much is given much is required. It might be well not to wrangle with such as think differently from them; in such cases few people are convinced by argument; the mind is too positive to yield "to reason's gimmering ray," time and patience will discover what words cannot. It may seem unreasonable, that any worm of the Earth should desire to have domini-

on over your faith, and to lord it over your Consciences; and it is still more provoking when insult is joined with tyranny, when their objections are delivered in a haughty, surly, dictatorial stile. Nevertheless, remember, that a soft answer turns away wrath, and bear it patiently for a season, and God will in due time give them to see the truth as it is in Jesus.

V. I shall now briefly address myself to my Brethren in the Ministry, and more especially to my Seniors and coevals.

My dear Fellow-labourers,

We see the grateful returns which we receive from many after a long series of labours and difficulties, after leaving every thing which was near unto us, and whatever talents any of us might possess either natural or acquired, either for honourable or profitable departments in life. Numbers of you, as well as myself, have been in mobs and tumults; in hunger and cold; in contempt and scorn; in weariness and painfulness, not having any certain dwelling-place; often glad to lay a weary body down in any poor cottage that was open to us: and what is our recompence from many, who under God owe their all on Earth to us? and if they had not been called of God by our Ministry, might still have remained in their original poverty and contempt, yea in the open road to everlasting ruin and misery; I say, what is our reward? Do they esteem us highly in love for our Work's sake? Are they giving that Scriptural obedience which the word of God requires? Are they trying to make the latter stages of a laborious life more easy and comfortable to us? Are they trying to profit by our more mature and advanced labours of love? Ah, No! We must
now

now subject ourselves to their dogmas without Scripture or reason; we must do worse than idle our time in spending the best part of the Lord's Day in sitting under men who neither preach nor live the Gospel! We must sanction unscriptural Doctrines, by our tacit approbation, as well as their unholy conversation. We must deny our call to the Ministry, renouncing some essential branches of it; we must reject the very privileges of Englishmen; we must suffer many whom we have called together, to be put to very great inconveniencies, both in respect to our times of preaching to them, and also be denied the privilege of either taking the Ordinances ourselves, or administering them to such as God has given us as Seals to our Ministry; and if we be unwilling to renounce our call, we must have calumny, lies, and contempt, cast upon us; scurrilous Pamphlets must be sought out and reprinted; we must be annexed to blank names, or coupled with *Buckle Beggars*; that is, like our Predecessors be counted the filth of the World, and the offscouring of all things. Think not this strange when you read the Epistle to the Corinthians and Galatians. But I ask you who esteem you most, or who are most likely to profit by your Ministry? those who look upon you as a set of overbearing intruders, or those who receive you as the chosen and sent of God, and who own you as their Fathers in the Lord? The one are willing to make your lives comfortable, and give full sanction to your mission, owning you as the Ministers of Christ; the other use every means to depress and mortify you, preferring any ignorant ungodly Sinner to you, if he is called a Clergyman; and, in short, not allowing you to be Ministers at all. Which of these act most agreeable to the word of God? The one desire to sit under your Ministry at the most convenient

ent time, that their hungry Souls may be fed with the rich truths of the Gospel; the other will prefer the hearing of that which is neither Law nor Gospel. The one wish to receive the sacred Symbols of your Saviour's passion from your hands; the other look upon it as highly presumptuous in you to handle them.

If any of you are not satisfied that it is your duty to administer the Ordinances, or think there is no necessity for you to do so, beware of condemning, or even judging, your Brethren, who think otherwise. Their doing of it does you no harm, because it takes nothing from you. They preach the same Christ, the same Faith, the same Hope, the same Love, the same plain, unerring way to Heaven. Many of them have born the burden and the heat of the day, and have not laboured in vain. God has honoured, and still does honour them; yea, he honours them in the very means which some so warmly oppose; that very circumstance should silence opposition, and ought to make every one careful what they do or say, lest they should be found fighting against God. When John the Baptist sent to our Lord to know if he were the Christ, our Saviour gave no other answer than that of appealing to his works; Saying, *Go and tell John the things which ye bear and see. The Blind receive their sight, and the Lamæ walk; the Lepers are cleansed, and the Deaf hear; the Dead are raised, and the Poor have the Gospel preached to them: and blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.** I apprehend this answer was sufficient both for John and those who were sent by him. In like manner he answered the Scribes and Pharisees; *the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness*

* Matt. xi. 5. 6.

ness of me.† The man that was born blind adopted the same mode of reasoning when the Jews objected, that Christ was a Sinner. *Whether he be a Sinner or no, said he, I know not: one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.—Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes.*‡ Saint Paul made use of the same argument to such as began to call in question his authority. *The sale of my Apostleship are yea in the Lord.*§ The test of true or false Prophets is, *By their Fruits ye shall know them.* Is not this a grand criterion to which we have always appealed to such as object to our mission as Preachers? to wit, Sinners being saved. Has not Mr. *Wesley* laid much stress upon this when pleading our cause? Look over his Journals and Appeals carefully again. Is not this one proof by which we judge of our Preachers being called to their work? We enquire, Have they Grace? Gifts? And have they *Fruit*? Now we appeal to matter of fact in the present case. Is there no Fruit of preaching in Church hours? Have none been awakened and converted to God? I believe we can call forth many witnesses. Have none been converted while we have been administering the Lord's Supper or Baptism? We can bring witnesses for the truth of this also, Now if God be for us, why should our Brethren be against us? It looks a little odd, that we must go the same ground over again, and combat our Brethren with the very same weapons with which we have been fighting the world so long.

I have affirmed, that Sinners have been convinced and converted by preaching in Church hours, and by administering the Ordinances; and have we any reason to think that

† *John* v. 36.

‡ *John* ix. 25. 31.

§ *1 Cor.* ix. 2.

that these poor Souls would have been convinced and converted, if their had been no Service at those Seasons? I take it for granted, you are no Calvinists, and therefore don't believe those Sinners would have been convinced or converted at those very times, whether they were in the way of duty or no. The good that is done upon Earth it is God that does it; and if God sets his seal to his own Work, who can say to him, *What dost thou?* Let me entreat you, my Brethren, not to stand in the way of Sinners: beware how you raise prejudice in our way, directly or indirectly; if you don't chuse to join us, don't stand in our way; leave the matter in God's hands, he will maintain his own cause. We do not seek to head any party, but to help on the work of God; to keep those Sheep in the fold which we have with much toil and labour sought in the wilderness. For how many thousands have been driven away from us, for want of opening a fold for them? not only driven from us, but I fear driven from God, by first hearing one strange wind of Doctrine and then another, and which have proved so many back ways into the World again. It has often been grief of heart to me, and much heaviness of mind, to see how such have, by that means, in process of time, forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living water, and are now, alas, fast asleep again. When I would have reasoned with some, they have said, you drive us from you; you will not preach to us at those times which are convenient for us to bring our families; nor will you baptize our Children; nor will you administer the Lord's Supper to us; and therefore you cannot blame us if we seek out help for ourselves." Consider, this is a sort of reasoning which is not easily answered. Let us attentively consider, that Conscience is an awful thing to trifle with,

nor ought we to put any force upon the Conscience of another; but rather let us become all things to all men, so that we may save some.

And you, my Brethren, who deem it your duty to make full proof of your Ministry, and to keep and administer the Ordinances, as they are delivered to us in the Oracles of God; I make no doubt but you have weighed the matter attentively; you have looked both into Scripture and reason; you see that the cause is good in which you have embarked; and likewise you have counted the cost, that you must sacrifice the favour of some of your friends; and such as are not very conscientious will not spare speaking perverse things, or catching at every evil report to render you odious. That is no new thing, it is a very *old plan*, which was from the beginning, and we must not let such matters move us. It is to me the greater proof of your sincerity, and that you have nothing sinister in your conduct, no "base, men pleasing temper." but that you are determined to act as in the sight of God. You see a number, a large number, of precious Souls, who are calling upon you for help; they esteem you as the Servants of God; they do not pour contempt upon you, they treat you as the Ambassadors of Christ, and are willing to follow you as you follow your master; they pray for you, they strengthen your hands, they encourage your hearts, and sincerely bid you good speed in the name of God, and give you all the opportunity you wish for to do them all the good which lies in your power. Moreover, God owns your undertaking, he sets his seal to your labour, a happy confirmation of your mission, so that you may be encouraged in the blessed work, fearing nothing that can oppose. Mean-while let us treat those kindly who may not think

as we do, let us give them as little offence as we can, consistently with vindicating our own conduct. There will be a furious party, which will, if possible, lord it over the Conscience of their Brethren; but there are others more moderate and calm, unto whom we may be useful, though they cannot altogether think as we do; they will hear us, and receive profit: thus may we become all things to all men, that we may save some. But such as receive the Ordinances from your hands put themselves under your care, and are willing to receive advice; will endure your admonitions, or even your well-timed reproofs, and as such are entitled to your special care, and therefore you are more immediately concerned in their welfare; they are your proper charge, and for whom you are more immediately accountable to the Great Shepherd, and Bishop of Souls. Moreover, as you minister to them spiritual things, they are quite willing to minister to you carnal things, and really grudge you nothing that is comfortable in life. They can see you in a decent coat, and your families in easy circumstances, without any ill-natured reflections, deeming your happiness a part of their own. Let us not drive these precious Souls, for whom Christ died, back into Egypt again; let us not compel them to hear strange Doctrines, such as are repugnant to the truth as it is in Jesus. Our Saviour bids them *beware of false Prophets*, and shall we drive them to hear such? The beloved Disciple commands us not to bid God *speed* to such as bring false Doctrine, nor to *receive them into our Houses*. and shall we exhort, yea, force the followers of the Lamb to bid God speed to the Propagators of error? What a fearful thing, *if after they have escaped the pollutions of the World through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,*

Christ, they should, through our negligence and perverseness, again be entangled and overcome, and their latter end worse than the beginning. Should we meet these in the way of error and seduction, what can we say to them? Shall we reprove them? Alas, they may retort it with aggravating keenness upon us,—“ You forced us to hear abroad, or a wrong way to Heaven, and now do you upbraid us? We took you for our guides, and you should have known the devices of Satan, and why did you thus expose us? We intreated you to break the bread of life to us, but our intreaties were in vain; you shut your doors against us, at the most convenient time for us to hear you; and, instead of shewing us plain Scripture proof for your conduct, you gave us only the stale repetition, “ It was contrary to the *old plan*, and that we must not leave the Church, it would give offence; and seeing you chuse to obey men rather than God, let our Souls be required at your hands.” What think you, my Brethren, of such a peal as this being rung in your ears? O prevent it! O feed those hungry Sheep? Be not afraid of the roarings of Bigotry, nor the inflammatory Epistles sent up and down the Land; being sent of God, let us make full proof of our Ministry. Remember how our Commission runs, Go ye all into the World; preach the Gospel to every Creature; teaching and baptizing in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. And lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the World!

I am, my dear Brethren, your affectionate Brother, and Fellow-servant, in the Vineyard of our never failing Immanuel,

THOMAS TAYLOR.

I beg the Reader to look at Mr. Wesley's Notes on John x. verses 9, 10, 11.-----2 Epistle of John verses 10, 11.

